

Women in Research

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"To create pathways to a more just and green future, we need to ensure that science and policy are informed by diverse expertise and experiences."

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DR. HADIYAH-NICOLE GREEN

The founder of the Ora Lee Smith Cancer Research Foundation discusses her novel cancer-killing technology

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Hadiyah - Nicole
Department

Women in Research: Advancements and Opportunities

As the pathway to leadership clears for women in research fields, so does the need for continued support and advocacy.

As one explores the leadership and advisory board pages of some of the leading research agencies and organizations, there is a notable absence: that of women and other historically disenfranchised groups. While a 2023 study found that 55% of MR professionals identify as women, just 25% are in leadership roles, illuminating a critical lapse of opportunity for diversity of thought in MR leadership.

This lack of representation and the call for greater diversity in leadership isn't paying lip service to DEI as many might claim; it's crucial to business success.

Encouraging diverse voices

Although there have been ideological and organizational changes in the research and insights field, there is still progress to be made. Nathalie Kantorowicz, founder of the-marketing-labs, noted that women in research often encounter a "glass ceiling" as the transition from middle management to senior management remains uncommon for women.

As the industry adapts to new technologies, its leadership must also evolve to reflect the diverse skills and identities within its workforce. Industry leaders must continue to strive for an inclusive workplace where diverse perspectives and experiences are represented at all levels of seniority, regardless of prevailing political or cultural views on the matter.

Including women and diverse professionals in leadership roles should be seen as a fundamental value that both enhances the core ethos of an organization, and opens the doors of business and financial opportunity.

Researchers are inherently curious and committed to understanding the human aspects of data and insights. Incorporating diverse voices, experiences, and expertise is essential for propelling the industry and its vital work forward into the future.



WRITTEN BY
Jessica Sage
Executive Director,
Women in Research (WiRe)

Advancing Women in Clinical Research: Progress and Efforts to Encourage Participation

Two experts in the field discuss the importance of increasing female participation in clinical research to improve healthcare outcomes for all.



Photo by Betsy Martin, NotJane Studio



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Why is it important to encourage women to take part in clinical research?

Neha Pagidipati: It used to be rare to see a woman carrying out clinical research, and even rarer to find one leading a large research program. This is changing to the benefit of clinical research and healthcare.

The presence of women in clinical research has been increasing over the last decade. This increase in female representation among research leaders and participants adds to the voices in the room, influencing the way questions are asked and answered, and improving the generalizability of study results. Looking ahead, it will be incredibly important for younger generations of women to have role models within clinical research, and to actively engage female and diverse participants in general. Representation begets representation.

Christina Brennan: It's hard to believe that the first mandate to include women in clinical research was in 1993, resulting in a knowledge gap that continues today. We need to include more women in clinical trials for two main reasons. First, there are biological differences between women and men — for example, in physiology, hormones, and organ and artery

sizes. If trials do not include enough women, it is impossible to predict how the drug or device will work in the real world. Second, certain diseases affect women and men differently. One example is the fact that women experience heart attack symptoms differently, which can lead to misdiagnosis and delayed treatment. We need to understand these variations more fully to enable treatments and devices to be tailored as needed.

At Northwell Health, we are working to seek out more women for opportunities to be investigators in clinical studies. This brings diverse perspectives and insights to studies, including helping to address any gender bias in protocol design and execution. Having more female investigators can encourage more women to take part in clinical trials, as well as increase awareness among potential clinical researchers of this rewarding career path. Including more women in the clinical research enterprise will bring benefits to healthcare, for both the current and future generations.

This article was written by the Association of Clinical Research Professionals (ACRP), the only non-profit dedicated to representing, supporting, and advocating for clinical research professionals, and whose mission is to promote excellence in clinical research.

Shaping the Future of Cancer Treatment and Advocating for Women in STEM

Megan O'Meara, M.D., head of early-stage development at Pfizer Oncology, is deeply committed to scientific innovation, mentorship, and breaking barriers for the next generation of women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) industries. In this conversation, she shares her journey in oncology, leadership philosophy, and vision of a world where people with cancer live better and longer lives.



INTERVIEW WITH
Megan O'Meara, M.D.
Head of Early-Stage
Development,
Pfizer Oncology

What drew you to a career in oncology and what is it that inspires you about working in this field?

I've always been curious about science. My grandfather was a pediatrician, and as a child he read me books about the history of medicine. In high school, I worked in cancer research labs, and that gave me exposure to the field from an early age. By the time I was in college, there were exciting advancements happening, including broader use of tumor profiling and targeted therapies. I felt there was a huge opportunity to transform cancer treatment, and I knew I wanted to be part of it. I pursued my medical degree and later transitioned to industry, where I felt I might have the broadest impact on the greatest number of people.

Women make up less than 30% of the global STEM workforce. What has your experience been as a woman in research?

Being a woman in a historically male-dominated field can come with unique challenges and opportunities. There were times when I was the only woman in the room. On occasion, I felt like the only one leaving the office on time to make dinner for my family, and I worried about missing opportunities or important conversations that were happening.

I learned to be confident in setting personal boundaries. I inserted myself in different ways and advanced my career without losing who I am. I developed the confidence to be me — bringing my most authentic and whole self to work. Now, I encourage and empower other women to do the same.

How are you working to change the research field to be more inclusive and supportive of women?

There were many people throughout my career who saw my potential and championed my advancement. I try to do the same for all my team at Pfizer, including the talented women who work with me. I mention their names in rooms with other leaders; I look for opportunities to showcase their potential.

Outside of work, I volunteer at my daughter's elementary school to organize events that engage students with science, such as bringing in Pfizer scientists



Photo by Ashi (Adobe Stock)

to demonstrate lab techniques like DNA isolation. I'm also active in the Society for Immunotherapy in Cancer (SITC) Women in Cancer Immunotherapy Network. I've spoken about my journey in research at their events, which are often attended by many women who are at a crossroads in their career.

As head of the division at Pfizer Oncology responsible for developing innovative cancer treatments, what excites you most about the work your team is currently doing?

Right now, I'm particularly excited about our work in antibody-drug conjugates (ADCs). ADCs are innovative cancer medicines that specifically target cancer cells and deliver cancer-killing drugs directly to tumors.

ADCs have been the foundation of my career, having worked in the space for almost 15 years. This depth of experience, knowledge, and history is being applied now to what we're doing at Pfizer to advance the field. And we've had a huge impact already — bringing treatments to people with blood cancer for the first time in decades and significantly changing the standard of care across tumor types.

Now, as a company, we're asking, "How do we make ADCs even safer and more effective?" This kind of innovation is why I pursued a career in STEM — it's tremendously fulfilling to be bringing us closer to a world where people with cancer live better and longer lives.

How is Pfizer uniquely positioned to make progress in cancer treatment?

I like to say Pfizer embodies a spirit of innovation, and that we have some of the most brilliant and dedicated scientists I've ever worked with. It's rare to work at a company that has demonstrated leadership across multiple modalities of science the way Pfizer has. We're constantly learning, adapting, and investing in what's next across a wide pipeline of products. It's an amazing powerhouse to be a part of.

What do you hope for the future of women in STEM?

I hope that in 20 years, women don't have to navigate as many barriers. I hope everyone can bring their whole self to the table without feeling like they need to sacrifice a piece of their personal life to succeed. Instead of feeling impostor syndrome around big opportunities, I hope women ask themselves, "Why not me?"

We still have work to do, but I truly believe we're making progress. By supporting women, we're supporting a better industry and better science.



Learn more about
Pfizer Oncology at
cancer.pfizer.com

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The Missing Ingredient in Efforts to Increase Women's Participation in Tech

The past few decades have sparked increasing concern over the underrepresentation of women in technology and other STEM fields.

Today, women occupy only 27% of jobs in computing. Why does a field that prides itself on innovative solutions continue to see such a gender gap?

The answer is a lack of attention to culture. Instead, change efforts have historically relied on “fix-the-person” approaches. However, encouraging women to be more “confident” or to have better “executive presence” will never change the status quo. Women often must implement strategies that make them seem “less confident” or not “direct enough” to survive a system that otherwise perceives them as too assertive or aggressive. If we do not change these systems and cultures, real change will not occur.

Here are a few research-based actions to help establish truly inclusive cultures that foster innovation:

- **Interrupt everyday biases and subtle slights.** Extensive research shows that women, especially women of color, receive more personality or stylistic criticism than men both in formal evaluations and informal conversations. Interrupting these comments can lead to productive discussion and the creation of new cultural norms.
- **Pay attention to whose voices are heard.** Research shows that underrepresented groups are interrupted more often than others, and they often do not get as much credit for their ideas. Simply looking out for these patterns and ensuring everyone can contribute makes a big difference.
- **Provide encouragement and early exposure to technical experiences.** Doing so helps girls and other marginalized kids counter stereotypes that hinder their participation.
- **Address biases in educational and business systems.** These systems include admissions and recruitment processes, performance evaluations, employee development practices, and return-to-office or hybrid work practices.

Written by **Catherine Ashcraft, Director of Organizational Research & Change, National Center for Women & Information Technology (NCWIT)**



Empowering Women in STEM: Building the Future Through Leadership and Community Belonging

Organizations like IEEE Women in Engineering play a crucial role in empowering women in STEM through mentorship, advocacy, and professional development.

STEM is the driving force behind countless innovations today. Yet, according to the latest data from the National Science Foundation's 2023 report, women comprise only about 29% of the STEM workforce. This marks a slight increase from previous years, but there is still an opportunity to improve representation, particularly in leadership roles. This must change — not just to close the gender gap but also to ensure that STEM becomes more forward-thinking.

When women are supported and empowered, they can help shape the future of science and technology. However, women in STEM still face significant challenges, including underrepresentation, gender bias, and a lack of visible role models or mentorship opportunities. Studies have shown that mentorship, a crucial pillar in supporting women in STEM, can significantly impact career advancement and retention.

To address this issue, it is essential to equip individuals with the skills and confidence to advocate for diverse talents in STEM. By sharing their leadership stories and journeys, mentors and role models inspire the next generation of women to envision themselves in STEM careers.

Effective mentoring networks connect women at every career stage

with experienced professionals who provide valuable guidance and support. Leadership is not just about reaching the top — it's about fostering a supportive community at every stage of one's journey. This includes engaging a broad network of allies to challenge systemic barriers and actively support women's success in STEM. By addressing challenges like limited access to mentorship, networking opportunities, and institutional support, the goal is to create a more harmonious and supportive environment. Organizations and initiatives focused on these efforts help ensure equal opportunities and create spaces where individuals can thrive.

Outreach programs and initiatives

Education and awareness of programs and initiatives that promote women in STEM are at the core of these efforts. Through workshops, seminars, and outreach programs, learning opportunities are provided for women at all levels, ensuring they have the tools and support needed to succeed. Engaging the next generation is crucial, which is why outreach efforts focus on bringing more young girls into STEM through targeted programs. By fostering curiosity and providing exposure to STEM fields early on,

these initiatives help build a diverse pipeline of future innovators.

Virtual programs further support these goals by offering valuable insights and guidance to women in STEM, helping them advance their careers and achieve their full potential. One significant outreach event is an annual day celebrating women in STEM, allowing the global community to participate in interactive events, sessions, and workshops designed to enhance their STEM skills and knowledge. This collaborative effort underscores an unwavering commitment to advancing women not only in STEM but across the broader professional domains.

The future of STEM depends on women — leaders, innovators, and changemakers. With both women and men working together as allies, the goal is to empower women to overcome obstacles, reach their aspirations, and foster a congenial and fair STEM environment for everyone.



WRITTEN BY
Winnie Ye
2025-26 Chair,
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Why We Need Women in Science to Build a Sustainable and Equal Future

The persistent gender gap in STEM undermines global gender equality commitments and limits our collective ability to tackle climate change effectively.

Despite progress made to narrow gender gaps in education, women remain crucially underrepresented in STEM fields. By 2021, globally, women only accounted for 35% of STEM graduates and 31.5% of researchers — a figure that has barely increased over the past 10 years.

This persistent gender gap not only reflects a failure to reach global gender equality commitments, but it also limits our collective ability to tackle one of the greatest challenges of our time — climate change. With 2024 being the hottest year on record and the climate crisis escalating, we need an all-hands-on-deck approach. People with diverse experiences are needed to raise awareness of climate impacts and create innovative solutions to these challenges. This means including women in research and recognizing women's knowledge in climate action.

Gender inequality

This need is amplified in light of growing evidence that climate change impacts men and women differently. Due to their unequal access to resources and their tendency to be primary caregivers, women are limited in their ability to respond and adapt to climate change. Recent estimates show that, globally, climate change may push up to 158 million more women and girls into poverty, and 236 million more women and girls into food insecurity by 2050.

As detailed in the UN Women's report, "Feminist Climate Justice: A Framework for Action," to address gender inequalities and climate change, systemic transformation is needed. We must start by recognizing and removing structural barriers, such as women's unequal access to information and education,



and reshaping gendered social norms and prejudices that can obstruct women's ability to enter and advance within these careers. Perceptions of gender stereotypes in these fields have been identified in children as young as six, partially explaining why only 15% of young women choose STEM courses as compared to 35% of men.

Blazing trails

Even women scientists at the highest levels must navigate these obstacles. For example, women's contributions to the critical Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Reports have increased significantly, from just 8% in 1990 to 33% in 2021, but women still face participation barriers. A survey of report contributors revealed that women's engagement was seen as limited by gender biases, such as women being ignored, discredited, or patronized.

Martina Caretta, a geographer, has been a trailblazer for women's knowledge in climate science. In 2021, she served as a lead author for the authoritative IPCC report, bringing to the fore Indigenous

knowledge on how to build climate resilience in water and food systems. Her work paves the way for greater recognition of diverse women's knowledge in shaping science and policy on climate change.

To create pathways to a more just and green future, we need to ensure that science and policy are informed by diverse expertise and experiences. This means expanding scholarship, internship, and mentorship opportunities for women in STEM fields; confronting gender stereotypes through media; and implementing non-discriminatory hiring and workplace practices, particularly in male-dominated sectors. It also means ensuring that policy processes can be influenced and informed by diverse perspectives, including the knowledge of Indigenous women that is essential for a just climate transition.



WRITTEN BY
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Research Analyst,
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For Your Next Competitive Advantage: Focus On Women's Health

Want more women in your organizations? It's time to start talking about the three Ms: menstruation, menopause, and motherhood.

The vast majority of women in the workplace have dealt with challenges related to monthly menstruation during their careers. In a 2023 survey, respondents cited their top symptoms as abdominal cramps, irritability, and fatigue. Sixty-one percent had worked when they didn't feel well enough to work. According to Let's Talk Menopause, 20% of the workforce is in some phase of menopause transition, which comes with its own extensive list of uncomfortable and potentially debilitating symptoms.

Motherhood includes yet another set of considerations. After births or adoptions, mothers are four times more likely than men to have their competence questioned, they are offered fewer opportunities than men, and they earn less than men over their careers.

Organizations have a huge opportunity to craft policies that support the three Ms. What does this look like?

- Normalize conversations around these topics
- Allow flexible work hours or remote work for those with menstrual pain, menopausal symptoms, mental health needs, and caregiving responsibilities
- Provide lactation rooms and on-site childcare or stipends to offset caregiving expenses
- Create clear and transparent leave policies for childbirth, adoption, loss of a child, and illness of a child
- Explicitly extend sick or personal leave for menstruation and menopause challenges
- Initiate employee resource groups focused on the three Ms

According to Meredith Gibson, CEO of the Association for Women in Science, "We need to retain more women in STEM to effectively tackle the world's complex challenges." I encourage businesses to boldly and proactively address women's health as an avenue to creating a more inclusive, attractive, and productive enterprise — or run the risk of losing out.



WRITTEN BY
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Dismantling DEI Is a Direct Attack on Women in STEM

STEM fields are the center of innovation, fueling advancements that drive economic growth and improve lives. Yet, despite decades of progress, the gender gap in STEM remains a barrier.

Women, particularly women of color, are still underrepresented in these critical fields, and recent efforts to dismantle diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives threaten to push us back even further. If we are serious about securing America's place as a global leader in innovation, we should be doubling down on investing in women — not gutting the very programs that support their success.

The data is clear: Diverse companies are 39% more likely to drive better solutions. In fields like artificial intelligence, where racial and gender biases have led to flawed algorithms with real-world consequences, the need for a broad range of perspectives is undeniable. Diverse scientific teams are more likely to challenge assumptions, identify blind spots, and develop creative solutions that benefit everyone. Yet, despite these advantages, women continue to face systemic barriers that push them out of STEM careers.

Across the country, lawmakers are dismantling DEI programs, rolling back decades of hard-fought progress for women and marginalized communities. These efforts are not just misguided; they directly impact our nation's ability to compete in a global economy. When we eliminate DEI initiatives, we don't just shut doors on individual women — we close off entire avenues of discovery, limit our technological advancements, and stifle economic growth.

We should be doubling down on investments in women in STEM, expanding opportunities for historically excluded groups, and ensuring that STEM fields reflect the full diversity of our nation. Our economy, our national security, and our future depend on it.



WRITTEN BY
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Shifting From Bitter to Sweet: A Woman's Health Goal

The term “bittersweet” isn't one typically associated with healthcare, but for many women today, their healthcare journeys are just that.

A woman walks out of her doctor's office. She sits down — in the lobby, in her car, on a bench — to process what she just heard. She thinks to herself, “They said I have...”

Insert endometriosis or lupus or psoriatic arthritis or narcolepsy or persistent depressive disorder. This is just a short list of chronic health conditions for which many women experience significant delays in diagnosis, and often much longer delays than men.

She feels fearful. She feels confused. She feels overwhelmed. But, she also feels hope and relief, because today's visit was different. After multiple trips to urgent care, months-long wait times to see different specialists, countless days that turned into years going to work while feeling unwell, and surmounting out-of-pocket costs for medications that were unable to manage her symptoms, today, she finally received an accurate diagnosis — a name to associate with her experience. Now there is hope for a pathway to improve not only her health but also her quality of life.

The importance of women in research

Many factors contribute to the diagnostic delays women

experience, including insufficient research funding and prioritization of women's health issues; historical exclusion of women from medical research; and societal norms and stigma that hinder access and engagement with the healthcare system. As such, preventive care and interventions that address the unique health needs of women are lacking. It is only since 1993, when public law established a precedent mandating the inclusion of women and minoritized populations in clinical research, that the tide for women's health research began to systemically shift.

Now, over 30 years later, many still fail to realize how essential women are to every corner of the healthcare ecosystem. Women are needed as investigators toward research discovery just as much as they must lead care delivery as healthcare providers. An often-minimized role for women in research, however, is their engagement as participants in clinical studies. Including women in research allows us to effectively study sex differences and learn more about diseases in both men and women alike.

Without the appropriate and safe inclusion of women in medical research, our medications, interventions, clinical guidelines,

and basic understanding of human health are compromised, and we are left with persistent knowledge gaps and disparities in health outcomes between women and men. For women of color, women living in rural communities, women at older ages, and pregnant populations, the unknowns about how to effectively diagnose and provide care are compounded in unacceptable proportions.

We must include women in research and study sex differences to truly understand the nuances of health and disease. We must empower women to engage the healthcare system at all levels to ensure their best health. We must work with communities safely and transparently, sharing findings and solutions with those who participated in the research. We must eliminate the barriers women experience accessing quality and innovative care. We must continue to invest widely and often in women's health research to sustain momentum in our progress.



WRITTEN BY
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Physicist Dr. Hadiyah-Nicole Green Uses Nonprofit to Raise Funds for Cancer-Killing Technology

Dr. Hadiyah-Nicole Green has developed a novel cancer-killing technology, Laser-Activated NanoTherapy (LANT), that is of high clinical relevance in the field of oncology.

In 2003, Dr. Green graduated from university with a degree in physics and a plan to revolutionize the way consumers receive cable TV and internet. She had diligently prepared herself for her future career in fiber optics and optical communication, and she was excited to finally be on her way. The day after graduation, however, her aunt, who had raised her, told Dr. Green that she had cancer.

"She was only given three months to live," Dr. Green recalled. "She also said she'd rather die than experience the side effects of chemo or radiation treatments." As Dr. Green nursed her aunt through the ravages of the disease, she remembers thinking, "We have satellites in outer space that can tell whether a dime on the ground is face up or face down, but we can't treat a tumor just at the site of the tumor? That doesn't make sense."

Three months after her aunt died, Dr. Green's uncle was diagnosed with esophageal cancer and given no more than six months to live. Dr. Green was the primary caregiver for her uncle while he received the conventional treatments of radiation and chemo. Although her uncle lived 10 years past his original prognosis, Dr. Green saw his body bear the brunt of the treatment's brutal side effects.

"I watched him wither down to nothing," Dr. Green said. "He lost all of his hair, and his skin looked like it had been barbecued." Seeing her aunt and uncle suffer at the hands of cancer and cancer treatments inspired Dr. Green to dedicate her life to developing innovative and more humane ways to attack and destroy cancer.

A cure without suffering

While cancer that is detected early has a high cure rate, nearly 10 million people still die from cancer each year worldwide. Even with the best care, any of us can be subjected to ineffective treatments, harsh side effects, lengthy treatment durations, prohibitive costs, and limited accessibility.

That's why Dr. Green developed a novel cancer-killing technology, Laser-Activated NanoTherapy (LANT). LANT directly addresses the urgent need



INTERVIEW WITH
Dr. Hadiyah-Nicole Green, Founder,
Ora Lee Smith Cancer Research Foundation

for more effective treatment options for people with difficult-to-treat cancers. LANT is designed as a minimally invasive, curative treatment for solid tumors that induces site-specific cellular death and tumor regression precisely at the site of laser activation. The peer-reviewed, preclinical in vivo LANT data showed complete tumor regression with clear tumor margins and healed skin in just 15 days after a single, 10-minute treatment without surgery, chemotherapy, radiation, or observed side effects. Because its mechanism of action is based on physics instead of biology, LANT is a platform therapy designed to have clinical indications for a variety of difficult-to-treat solid tumors, such as brain, pancreatic, breast, prostate, and head and neck cancers.

Dr. Green founded the Ora Lee Smith Cancer Research Foundation, a 501(c)(3) cancer nonprofit, to keep the cancer-killing technology she developed affordable for all and stay independent. The Ora Lee Smith Cancer Research Foundation is on a mission to change the way cancer is treated and reduce cancer-patient suffering by providing a treatment that is accessible, affordable, and effective.

The future of cancer research

Dr. Green acknowledges that none of us are islands; we all stand on the shoulders of those who came before us. As such, she pays it forward by creating opportunities in her research laboratory and nonprofit for women and students in STEM to grow their research and personal skills.

"My advice to young women interested in pursuing research careers is to put your best into everything that you do so that when opportunities come, you will be prepared," Dr. Green said. "Everyone has a divine purpose for being on the planet. Channel your joy or pain into finding your purpose."

Written by **Mediaplanet**

The Role of Social Science in **Shaping Dynamic and Collaborative Leadership**

Senior Vice President of Human Services Julie Kochanek discusses how behavioral science informs her leadership at American Institutes for Research (AIR), emphasizing trust, collaboration, and community-building in research.

How do you build strong teams to accomplish AIR's mission?

At AIR, collaboration is key to our success. Project teams at AIR often include staff with different backgrounds, various methodological expertise, unique content knowledge, and/or experience working directly with community leaders. Our work is strengthened by bringing people together. This allows us to fully consider the challenge we're studying and understand the needs of the communities we serve.

What are some of the most important results you have uncovered across your 20+ years in the research sector?

Discussions about education policy often overlook the importance of human connection. Building relationships among educators and students is crucial for setting the right condition for learning. For example, partnerships between educators, researchers, and school leaders have created stronger support systems for at-risk students through early warning systems, leading to higher graduation rates. Additionally, using research to enhance reading instruction has proven successful, but it requires significant investment in hands-on training and coaching for teachers. Investing in our teachers is essential for long-term success.

What advice would you give women just beginning their careers in research?

Women are better represented in behavioral and social science research than in other scientific fields, but we still face barriers, including balancing work and family, dealing with bias, and having fewer opportunities for funding and leadership. Addressing these barriers is important because evidence shows that diverse research teams bring more innovative and effective solutions.



INTERVIEW WITH
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